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Tell El-Farkha (Ghazala), 2010-2011

Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean 23/1, 117-140

2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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TELL EL-FARKHA (GHAZALA) 2010–2011

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Abstract: The three koms making up the predynastic site of Tell el-Farkha in the Nile Delta in Egypt continued to be explored in seasons 2010 and 2011. The most important discoveries in the extended trench on the Western Kom were new architectural structures, associated with a so-called Naqadan residence. On the Central Kom, the layout of an Early Dynastic house was cleared up in new excavations; finds included a figurine of a pig in clay. The eastern border of First/Second Dynasty burial field on the Eastern Kom was excavated, uncovering eight new graves.

Keywords: Tell el-Farkha (Ghazala), Western Kom, Naqada culture, Central Kom, Early Dynastic, Eastern Kom, graves, Protodynastic

Excavations were carried out in both seasons, 2010 and 2011, on all three mounds making up the site at Tell el-Farkha in the Nile Delta. The main trench on the Central Kom (work on which was completed the previous year) was extended to the west, covering another 120 m². On the eastern slope of the western tell, a test

trench (10 m by 2 m) was excavated and another test trench (10 m by 3 m) was opened (and subsequently backfilled) at the eastern border of the cemetery on the Eastern Kom. The most important discoveries were new architectural structures on the Western and Central Koms and eight graves on the Eastern one.

WESTERN KOM

Excavations on the Western Kom were carried out within the old trench that had been opened in 2006–2007, excavated further in 2006–2008 and extended to the north in 2009. At the close, the excavation area covered over 10 ares.

New rooms were discovered, the most important ones being situated between the huge walls (1.60 m thick) of structure W240 discovered in previous seasons.

Only the north and east walls of this last structure were preserved, the rest having been destroyed, probably in modern times (Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2011: 154). The newly uncovered features were founded on a layer containing abundant traces of ashes colored red, black and white. It could be a layer of burning testifying to the presence of ovens. Of particular interest was unit W253, which yielded a deposit of 19 small

vessels as well as fragments of a few bigger bowls. There were also a small flint knife and a fragmentary Nile mollusk shell. A big storage jar and three small vessels were discovered below the first deposit and another storage vessel about 30 cm deeper down [Fig. 1].

A mud-brick wall (one and a half brick wide), oriented north–south, was traced at the eastern border of structure W253 and in underlying layers it was joined to another one going from east to west. Together they formed the corner of a room (W255)



Fig. 1. Storage vessels in situ

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Dates of work: 13 March–29 April 2010; 3 March–14 April 2011

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All photos in this report by Robert Słaboński.

[Fig. 3], evidently associated with W240. Rooms W253 and W255 were directly beneath a chapel with votive deposits discovered earlier (see Ciałowicz 2012a). Structure W255 contained 10 almost



Fig. 2. Fireplace with pot inside in W255

completely preserved vessels and fireplaces with typical pots standing inside them [Fig. 2]. These units are connected undoubtedly with the so-called Naqadian Residence, the eastern part of which was excavated in 2002–2003 (see Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2004; Ciałowicz 2012a).

Traces of at least three wooden posts, approximately 15 cm in diameter and placed at intervals of about 0.80 m, were preserved on the inner side of the east wall of room W240 [Fig. 6, left]. They were too thin to support the roof (which probably rested on the thick walls of the feature, hence it is possible that they were part of a kind of inner cladding made up of wooden planks fixed to these posts. Fired bricks in the same wall [Fig. 6, right] could confirm this idea; they would have been



Fig. 3. Structures W253 on the right and W 255 on the left; view from the north

baked had such wooden siding gone up in flames at some point. Wood was used as cladding on the inner walls in Naqada III graves, as proved in excavations at Abydos (Dreyer, Engel *et alii* 1996: 25). The custom was also recorded in the royal graves at Umm el-Qaab (see, for example, the Aha grave; Kaiser, Dreyer 1982: 213–219). The evidence from Tell el-Farkha can be construed as yet more proof of close links between the arrangement of early Egyptian houses and graves.

A sickle handle made of a cattle rib bone was found near the north wall of W240 and near it a kind of quern stone

that may have been used for grinding ocher (R. Schild, personal communication) [Fig. 4].

The structures underlying an adjoining complex of small rooms of clearly utilitarian function on the north (discovered in the previous season) proved to be much bigger than the later features, built with greater skill and having thicker walls) [Fig. 7]. The function appears to have been similar, as attested by ovens and hearths, also with pots standing in them, layers of ashes, organic remains (bones of animals and fish) and typical pottery. The structures uncovered in 2009 were later additions,



Fig. 4. Finds from W240: rare bone sickle handle (top) and quern stone of basalt



Fig. 5 Storage vessel set in the lower part of a similar jar



Fig. 6. Traces of wooden posts on the inner side of the east wall of structure W240 (left) and fired bricks in the same wall (right)

evidently built hurriedly in answer to specific needs.

Again, no architectural remains were noted in the southern and southeastern part of the tell (Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2012: 135–140), confirming the idea that also in this period (Naqada IIIA) the inhabited area of the Western Kom was much smaller than in later periods.

Pottery from the upper layers excavated in 2010 and 2011 has been connected with the beginning of phase 4 at Tell el-Farkha (i.e., Naqada IIIA), ceramics from lower layers with phase 3 (Naqada IID2/IIIA). A dozen or so complete vessels, mostly of smaller size, were discovered, along with an abundance of sherds scattered throughout the excavated area. A few storage jars and some lower parts of similar vessels, in one case set one into the other [Fig. 5; see also Fig. 1], were also discovered. Possibly when the first jar was broken, the next one was placed in exactly the same place.

Most vessels were made of local silt and can be classified as Rough (more than 98%), even storage jars. Only a few fragments represented Polished ware. The most common forms were small jars, pot-stands and bowls. Interestingly, bread molds are extremely rare in this part of the site compared to other parts, adding to the evidence for the different character of the Western Kom and its connection with a local elite. A spinning bowl fragment, resembling several others discovered during the previous seasons, confirms the presence of workshops in this quarter.

Noteworthy is a so-called Bird Vase [Fig. 8], made of local silt, which is probably an imitation of a Palestinian vessel. A similar vessel, known to be red-polished, is known from grave 1600 in Hemamieh (Brunton, Caton-Thompson 1928: Pl. XXXVIII, 34c), but the discoverers failed to describe or even date their finds. Another vessel from Mostagedda (Brunton



Fig. 7. Northern complex of rooms, view from the north



Fig. 8. So-called Bird Vase



Fig. 9. Different kinds of tokens



Fig. 10. Greywacke bird-shaped cosmetic palette with traces of red paint

1937: Pl. XXXVII,17), from a Predynastic context dated to the early Gerzean by the excavators, shows similarities with our vase.

Of interest is a kind of stand, only partly preserved, evidently wider in its upper part and with traces of burning. It could be a sort of plate on a stand or even an offering stand or altar, similar to those known for instance from Tell Ibrahim Awad (Šerkova 2002: 148, Figs 6, 10).

Among the rare small finds was an almost complete greywacke palette from the southern part of the trench [Fig. 10].

It was oval in shape (21.3 cm by 14.4 cm) with an evident bird head (the beak is broken) on one side and a tail on the other, as well as a small leg in the bottom part. Use-wear marks included shallow depressions and traces of grinding on both sides of the object. Remnants of red paint (ocher?) were preserved on the surface.

A greywacke palette fragment has also found as well as, part of a clay model of a boat and numerous small items of diverse shape, which may have been used as tokens [Fig. 9].

CENTRAL KOM

After ten years of excavations, in 2009, the level of culturally sterile *gezira* sand was reached 6 m down in the main trench on top of the Central Kom. Based on the results we could reconstruct a full history of occupation of this part of the site from the first settlers, that is, societies of the Lower Egyptian Culture, to the last occupants in the beginning of the Old Kingdom (Chłodnicki 2011). The most important discoveries were connected with the settlement of Lower Egyptian culture: village with small dwelling-houses built of organic materials, but also a huge architectural structure, referred to as a ‘residence’. It was built first of organic building material, which were later replaced with thick mud-brick walls. Not only the architecture, but also objects found with it (golden beadstand, mace-heads) indicated its importance (Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2011: 157–161; 2012a: 138–143).

Current work aimed at tracing the full layout of this building and determining in the process whether the settlement had been surrounded by a defense

wall, as suggested by excavations in the previous season.

In 2010, a test trench, 10 m by 2 m, was located on the eastern slope of the mound, the objective being to verify the results of geophysical prospection which indicated the presence of a wall surrounding the settlement from the east. The other issue to be checked was whether the settlement extended to this point or whether there was a shallow bay between the Central and Eastern koms as suggested by geological drilling (Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz *et alii* 2007: 126–127). The soil proved hard and compacted and there were no structures to bear out the magnetic anomaly visible on the map. The stratigraphy consisted of several layers of compacted silt, sometimes separated by a thin layer of sand. Finds included only a few water worn potsherds and some flints. Underlying the layer of clean alluvial silt was a thin layer of bluish-gray clay mixed with sand, which is indicative of marginal water. The exploration confirmed the idea of there being a shallow bay in this spot in Predynastic times, indicating as expected

that the size of the settlement at the time was smaller than suggested by the present size of the mound.

In 2011, the main trench on the Central Kom was extended 120 m² to the west, covering the slope of the kom (squares C52b, 53a, 62d, 63c, and unexcavated parts of squares C53b, 63d), limited by the old trench from the north (squares

C62b, 63ab) and east (excavated, eastern parts of squares 53b, 63d).

The youngest phase of occupation in the eastern part of the trench (levels 1–3) was assigned to the early Old Kingdom based on pottery finds, mostly fragmentary bread moulds, but also a *Meidum* bowl. A small fragment of seal with hieroglyphs was also found. The relevant architecture



Fig. 11. Plan of an Early Dynastic house on the eastern edge of the Central Kom. Legend: 1 – mud-brick walls, 2 – ovens, 3 – silt, 4 – soft soil; A – area excavated in 2010–2011, B – area excavated in 2001–2004 (Drawing M. Chłodnicki)

was heavily damaged. Walls were 1.50 m thick and the orientation of buildings (NE–SW) was typical of Tell el-Farkha. Only one small room, 1.50 m by 2.70 m, could be traced.

Remains from the end of the Early Dynastic Period (levels 4–11) were much better preserved. Walls were one-and-a-half brick thick, only 0.30 m high, intensively burrowed in by animals (foxes and rodents). The architecture appears to have been a typical house with a courtyard, 5 m by 5 m, surrounded by smaller, narrow rooms. The western part, already on the slope of the mound, was destroyed. In a younger phase, the building was rearranged, a silos, 1.90 m in diameter, being installed on the western side of the courtyard. On the three better preserved sides of the house (northern, eastern and southern), the courtyard was surrounded by rooms about 2.50–3.00 m wide and 3 m to 5 m long. The biggest (No. 3), situated on the northern side of the courtyard, yielded evidence of ovens and a layer of ashes.

Walls discovered on the eastern side of the courtyard were a continuation of the walls discovered in 2001. They formed

rooms C131 and C132, the size of which could now be determined as 2.50 m wide and 4 m long. Walls on the northern side of the courtyard were a continuation of a building excavated in 2004. The combined evidence of previous and current excavations has given a complete house plan [Fig. 11].

Pottery was abundant in the chambers as well as courtyard and consisted, much like in the upper strata, of fragmentary bread molds. Animal bones, loose stones and flints were scattered all over the surface. Finds from the building included animal figurines: a faience head of a crocodile [Fig. 12, left], once part of a figurine, and a complete figurine of a pig with elongated head and characteristic snout, made of clay, featuring moreover a deep groove dividing the back into two parts [Fig. 12, right]. Although pig bones are predominant in the osteological material from Tell el-Farkha, it is the first time that a figurine of the animal has been found. Representations of pigs are rather uncommon in ancient Egyptian art (Ciałowicz 2012b: 234).

A complete oval palette decorated with alternately oblique lines, forming



Fig. 12. Early Dynastic figurines: crocodile head in faience and figurine of a pig in clay

a zigzag pattern, was discovered in the house [Fig. 14]. It resembles a palette of similar shape and decoration found on the Western Kom in 2002, in a Naqada III level (Inv. No. W/02/59). Both are similar to Petrie's type 61H (Petrie 1921: Pl. LVI).

A copper awl, 15 cm long, came from the earlier Early Dynastic levels (Naqada IIIC1; levels 12–14). It was trapezoidal in section, thicker in the middle and thinner at the ends, with an eye on one end. A similar objects discovered at Tell el-Farkha in 2004 was interpreted tentatively at the time as part of a Lower Egyptian crown (Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2007: 84, Pl. VII.1); studies since have recognized these objects more likely as netting needles (Czarnowicz 2012a: 253, Fig. 4.3,5). Both objects were found not



Fig. 13. Head of a falcon on a sherd



Fig. 14. Oval palette of greywacke

far one from one another, in the same house, which lay on the fringes of the settlement, close to the water edge. It could have belonged to a fisherman.

The head of a falcon (coming from a baulk trim) on a sherd should be interpreted as part of a *serekb*, probably from the Iry-Hor–Narmer horizon [Fig. 13]. It should be associated with the Early Dynastic house.

An earlier, Protodynastic (Naqada IIIB) building was located under Early Dynastic architecture. The younger structure repeated its orientation, although there were differences regarding the course of walls in the older building and their thickness (some walls were two-bricks thick). The courtyard also was smaller. This building will be explored further in the upcoming season.

EASTERN KOM

NORTHERN TRENCH

In 2010–2011, archaeological excavations of the settlement in the northern part of the Eastern Kom were conducted in two stratigraphical levels: layers dated to Early Dynastic times (IIIC2–IIID) and Protodynastic layers dated to Naqada IIIB–IIIB/C1. Early Dynastic layers (1–10) were explored in the extension of the previous trench to the north (area E85–E86) and to the east (area E76bd), as well as in square E76ac (layers 8–10), where excavations had started in 2009 [Fig. 15]. Exploration of the extension covering the top of the Eastern Kom was aimed at establishing the northern and northeastern border of the Old Kingdom cemetery. Graves dated to that period were found in square E75 and in the western part of E76 (Dębowska-Ludwin 2012: Fig. 1). A grave was visible in the southern baulk of square E85.

Only one grave (109) was discovered in the two seasons reported and it turned out to be the northernmost one of the Old Kingdom cemetery. The body was buried stretched out on its back and there were no grave offerings. The grave was dug into the remains of Early Dynastic settlement, of an economic nature. The only better

preserved structure, partly excavated, was a rectangular building of mud brick (EN277), located on the northern fringes of trench E85. It had walls one-and-a-half brick thick and was divided into at least two rooms (EN286 and EN296). The south wall, oriented E–W (unlike the NE–SW orientation typical of Tell el-Farkha) and slightly crooked, was 8 m long, corresponding to the length of the house. This E–W orientation appears to be specific to the northern part of the Eastern Kom. A similar orientation has been recorded for structures discovered in squares E93–E94, excavated in 2002–2003 (Chłodnicki 2012: Fig. 7).

A group of rounded structures, probably siloses, was located to the south of building EN277. They were 2.50–3.50 m in diameter on average, the smallest being just 1 m. Walls were 15 cm (half a brick) thick, seldom 30 cm (one brick), making them quite flimsy. They were often apparently superimposed on one another. A wall enclosed the siloses on the south.

Two big storage jars, both more than half a meter high, were discovered undisturbed among the siloses. One of them (EN452) [Fig. 16, center] was sealed with a mud-stopper. A darker trace on

the wall, reaching two-third of the height of the vessel, attested to the content of the jar. This jar also bore two “potmarks”, both being a kind of triangle with the sides longer than the base, differing in shape and details of execution [Fig. 16,

right]. The first triangle was approximately equilateral with the apex turned down. The second triangle was sharp-angled with the apex turned up. The shorter side was less deeply executed than the other one. The sign as a whole resembled a hoe. A similar

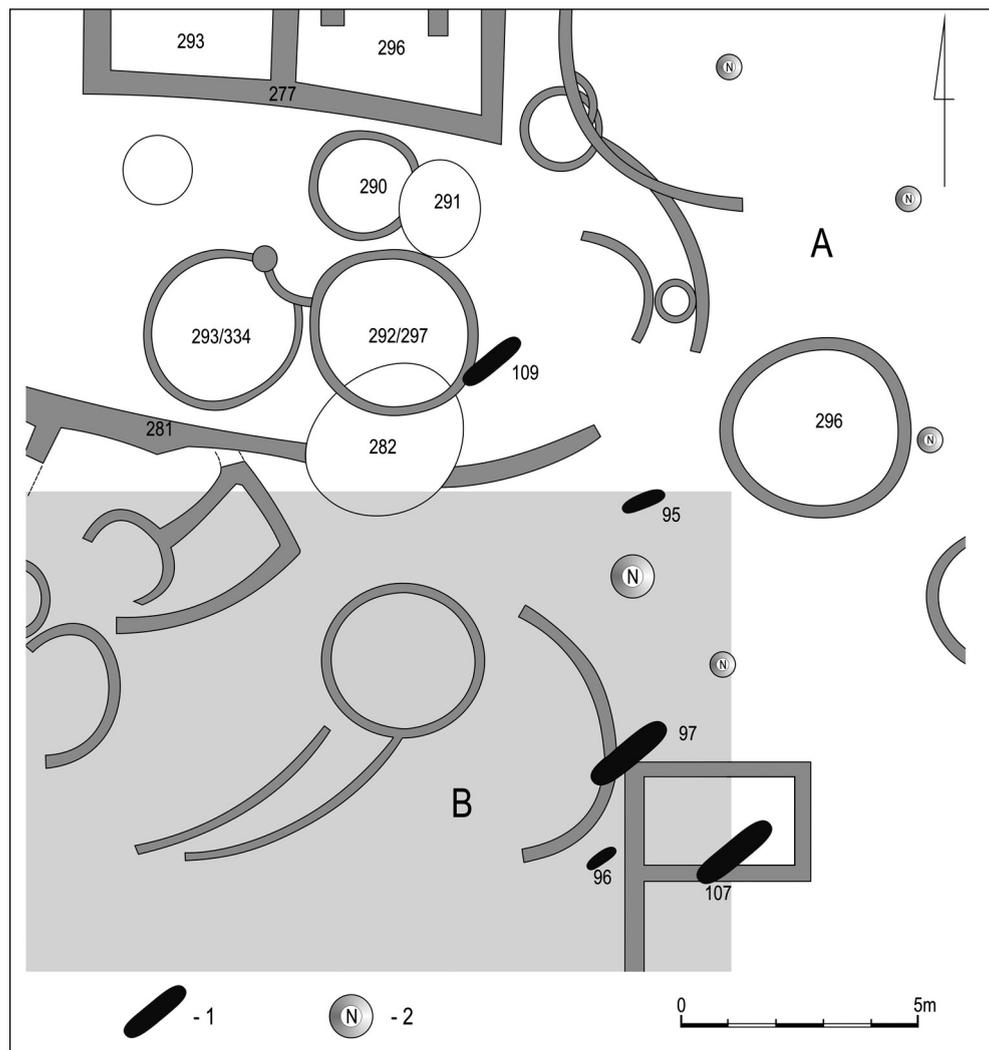


Fig. 15. Remains of the Early Dynastic settlement on the Western Kom (ares E75–E76 and E85–E86); legend: 1 – graves, 2 – pots; A – area excavated in 2010–2011, B – area excavated in 2008 (Drawing M. Chłodnicki)



Fig. 16. Two storage jars found standing among the siloses, the one in the center bearing potmarks; on the right, close-up of the “potmarks” on this jar



Fig. 17. Bread molds: Early Dynastic (top) and Protodynastic forms (bottom)

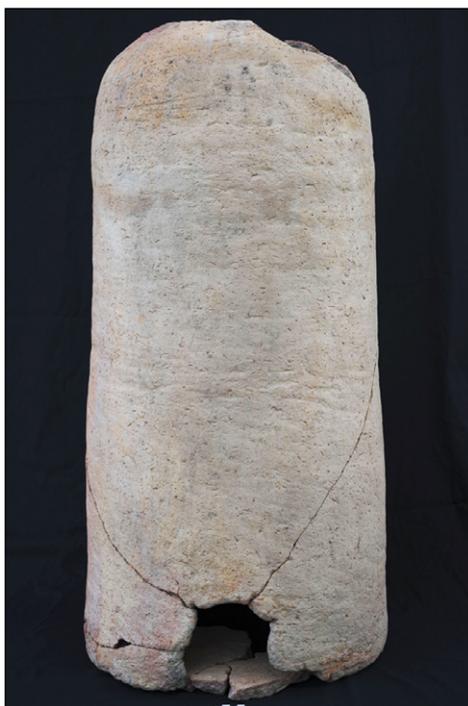


Fig. 18. Ceramic silos

potmark was found on a jar from grave 1 at Tell el-Farkha (Jucha 2008: 136–137), the jar being also similar in form: ovoid, broad-shouldered, but additionally decorated with a band. Grave 1 was dated to the Protodynastic period (Dębowska-Ludwin 2012: Fig. 1). Similar potmarks are also known from Minshat Abu Omar, where they were classified as *mr*-hoes. They occurred on a cylindrical jar and a small ovoid vessel (Kroeper 2000: 210).

Many fragmented and complete bread molds were found among the siloses [Fig. 17], as well as smaller pots, mostly beer-jars, the latter positioned upside down. Grinding stones were also frequent.

Unique among the finds was a complete ceramic silos. It was 1 m high and 0.50 m in diameter at the base [Fig. 18]. The

opening in the upper part was 23 cm in diameter and it had the edges around the opening thoroughly worn from intensive use. A horseshoe-shaped opening near the base, 11 cm wide and 14 cm high, was used to remove grain from the silos. Models of siloses of identical shape have been excavated at Tell el-Farkha before, in grave 50 (see Kołodziejczyk 2009).

Several complete and broken luxury stone vessels were also discovered in this area, including a bowl of porphyry and a presumed lid made of greywacke and pots of alabaster. These finds seem to have been a secondary deposit, having been plundered from older graves, like the items discovered in 2009 in neighboring square E75a (Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2012: 152). One should mention among the finds



Fig. 19. Protodynastic structures with a road between them (view from the north)

a fragment of a clay figurine of a quadruped and part of a clay seal with hieroglyphic inscription.

Levels of cut down and poorly preserved walls dated to Early Dynastic times had been discovered under the Old Kingdom cemetery in are E75 (Chłodnicki, Ciałowicz 2012: 151). Successive layers (17–29) explored in 2010–2011, totaling 1.30 m in thickness, were dated to Naqada IIIB–IIIC1. Of greatest interest was a structure made up of two parallel walls, which formed a kind of a street, 1.50 m wide [Fig. 19]. This passage was oriented NE–SE and led from the direction of the ancient water canal (whether it reached it or not is not yet known) to the eastern side of the monumental mastaba (E10), dated to Naqada IIIA/B (Ciałowicz 2011). Buildings stood on both sides of this street. The walls of these rooms, were covered with fine gray mud plaster. Remains of fireplaces, were discovered, one with a pot-stand, inside the houses. A rounded rattle and a pot with two small knives of almost identical shape, one of schist and the other of copper, were found on the eastern side of the street (Chłodnicki 2012: 28, 30).

The street was a survival from earlier strata, this feature still being evident in the lower strata (Naqada IIIB). From the western side it was flanked by a thick wall (EN308) connected to the mastaba



Fig. 20. Copper knife

(E 10). This thick wall divided the trench into two parts. Both finds and building layout differed on the two sides of this wall. On the western side was a group of ovens (EN331, 332, 333), some containing pot-stands as well as the upper part of a pot of Petrie's type L30 (Petrie 1921: Pl. XLVI), so frequent in ovens at Tell el-Farkha. This part of the settlement was connected with dwellings known from squares E83–E84 and E73–E74, excavated in 2008. Wall (EN347) discovered in the western part of trench E75 (one-and-a-half brick wide) constituted the east wall of building EN229, built to the north of the mastaba (E10), partly explored in 2008. The building consisted of just one room sized 5 m by 2.50 m (Chłodnicki 2012: 23). Between this building and the western wall flanking the road (EN308) there was a thick layer of ashes. Traces of fire could be seen on the walls as well. The wall (EN308) gradually thickened to 2 m in its lower part (additional walls EN336, EN337) and seems to have been part of a mastaba.

The road (EN300) continued in all of the layers explored in 2011. The mud-brick building located to the east of the road was explored only in its western part (the eastern part being already beyond the trench). It was 8 m long by at least 6 m wide and consisted of three rooms. The interiors were plastered with fine pale gray mud plaster. A relatively small-sized room in the southwestern corner of the building (EN342; 2 m by 3 m) was surrounded by walls that incorporated several small drop-shaped vessels, upper parts of grinding stones and a small bowl broken in two (Chłodnicki 2012: Fig. 10). A complete copper knife with handle was also found inside one of the

rooms (Czarnowicz 2012: 351, Fig. 1.3). With a length of 19 cm, it is the largest copper object unearthed in Tell el-Farkha [Fig. 20]. In shape it resembles flint knives with handles known from many specimens found at Tell el-Farkha (see Kabaciński 2012: Fig. 12). Two bifacial flint knives, both of them of simple form without handle, were discovered in the same room and in an adjacent one (EN350). Long, unfinished sickle blades, debitage and complete sickle blades originated from the northern room of the house (EN341), which was 2.50 m wide and more than 5 m long. It must have housed a workshop producing harvesting implements. A complete bread mold was also found in the house, its shape being more archaic compared to moulds found in the upper strata [see Fig. 17 bottom]. A unique fish-shaped palette decorated on the border with a herringbone pattern came from near the house (Buszek 2012: Fig. 7.7).

[MC]

SOUTHERN TRENCH

Work in 2010–2011 was concentrated on the cemetery and layers around the large structure (E10) found in 2004, probably one of the oldest Egyptian mastabas (Ciałowicz 2011) [Fig. 21]. One of the main objectives in 2011 was to establish the eastern border of the burial field, the last to be traced as the northern, southern and western limits are known. A test trench, 10 m (E–W) by 3 m (N–S), was opened in squares 38 and 39, near the road separating the Eastern Kom from the Ghazala village.

Underlying the modern strata at the top were layers representing a period of destruction and abandonment, including fragmented pottery and pieces of flint, but no architectural remains. A thin layer of sand, probably the result of a Nile flood, covered relics of architecture that could be associated with a settlement existing on the Eastern Kom during the last phase of its occupation (end of Early Dynastic



Fig. 21. General view of mastaba (E10) after season 2011 (view from the southeast)

period/beginning of Old Kingdom) (see also Ciałowicz 2008).

Four graves (Nos 115–118) were traced in the level under these narrow walls in the test trench and three other graves (Nos 111–112; 4) belonging to the same cemetery were excavated in the main trench.

Grave 111 [Fig. 22] was a small (1 m by 0.90 m), shallow (approximately 0.40 m) and compact pit faced with mud bricks arranged perpendicular to the length of the walls. It was divided into two chambers. The larger one (chamber N) was used as the burial place. The skeleton was that of an adult female accompanied by a single and small pottery bowl, as well as a deposit of seven miniature vessels of alabaster: two small jars with barrel-shaped body, one cylindrical vessel with very reduced height and four flattened jars with turned-out rim. A stone grinder and two beads of agate were also found. The body was lying on a mat in tightly contracted position, on the left side, her head turned to the north. The second chamber (S) in the structure was for storage and was filled with seven, mostly damaged, pottery beer-jars. Two bowls were found on the top of the brick walls of the grave substructure. A regular mud-brick superstructure of rectangular shape secured the tomb, its maximum measurements matching the underground part. The height of the superstructure could not be assessed due to poor preservation (barely 0.20 m above ground level at the time of construction). It merits note that the tomb was oriented exactly N–S. The stratigraphic position, characteristic orientation and grave goods all point to a date at the turn of the First Dynasty (see Dębowska-Ludwin 2012).

Grave 112 was a simple pit burial without offerings of any kind. It belonged to an infant resting in contracted position on its right side, the head clearly turned towards the northeast. The body was covered with a mat. The date to the beginning of the Second Dynasty is based solely on stratigraphic data.

Grave 114 was a finely preserved tomb, that with its form, set of offerings and stratigraphic position fitted perfectly the oldest group of burials in the cemetery. Thus, it should be dated to Naqada IIIB (Dębowska-Ludwin 2012: 53). The structure (maximum size 2.58 m by 2.28 m) was composed of a super- and substructure oriented N–S and shifted slightly to the east. The superstructure, preserved to a height of about 1 m, was made of bricks and had a regular shape, very close to a square. This part of the grave was clearly constructed over a mound that was raised over the burial chamber and successively faced with bricks. Interestingly, in the case of grave 114 there is no doubt that the aboveground part of the tomb had had slightly sloping walls. Moreover, the neighbouring structure 94 (composed of traces of mats and numerous potsherds), which is apparently the ground surface of the ancient cemetery, was found leaning against the lower part of the superstructure. Evidently, the tombs had been meant to be seen and admired by the living.

The substructure was relatively deep (0.76 m) and small (a single chamber with inner space measuring 1.08 m by 0.68 m), constructed of large bricks of dark mud arranged alongside the walls [Fig. 23]. The burial chamber with the body and the grave offerings was meticulously secured with liquid, silty and very plastic mud that was poured in and by filling the resultant



Fig. 22. Grave 111, view from the south



Fig. 23. Burial chamber of grave 114



Fig. 24. Grave 116, view from the east

shaft with brick rubble. These operations prevented the burial from being robbed, but they also contributed to the pitiful state of the human remains and other objects in it.

The deceased was an adult and had received as offerings an interesting set of objects. The six pottery vessels included a wine-jar and five cylinders with impressed rope decoration; there were also four stone vessels, two of these being bowls of basalt and two miniature jars of alabaster. Moreover, the set consisted of a fairly large rectangular schist palette with geometric line decoration, a small grinder and a necklace. The latter was composed of color beads of different size and shape: two teardrops of agate, cornets and a ball of carnelian, and 73 small beads of steatite. Fragments of black mica were

discovered in the leg area, but it was impossible to recognize the object they had been part of. Lumps of red ochre were recorded next to the basalt bowls. The deceased had been buried in a position that was not entirely anatomical with the limbs tangled together. Presumably it had been planned as a customary contracted burial, the body on the left side, head to the north, but failed in execution. In addition, the body was crushed by falling pots during the closing and securing of the tomb.

The younger grave 111 was superimposed on the southeastern corner of the superstructure of this grave, indicating by their mutual position and visible differences in orientation that the two structures belonged to two separate cemeteries located on the Eastern Kom.



Fig. 25. Fragment of a mud-brick structure at the bottom of the test trench

Grave 115 (from the test trench) was a small, shallow and compact pit structure in which a poorly preserved and very contracted skeleton was found. There were no grave offerings of any kind.

Grave 116 [Fig. 24] was located in the eastern part of the test trench. The contracted body of an adult man was found lying on his left side with head to the north. The grave equipment was composed of eight beer-jars, mostly broken, one red-polished bowl and two small travertine vessels. The burial pit was clearly visible.

Just under the grave-pit a layer of pure mud was recognised, about 0.50 m thick, obviously evidence of Nile flooding. Below it excavations revealed the southwestern corner of a huge structure with walls more

than 1 m thick [Fig. 25]. The conclusion that arises from this (the structure will be excavated in the upcoming season) is that environmental factors played a role in shaping occupation at Tell el-Farkha that was equally essential as political and economic events.

Grave 117 was much destroyed and had no offerings of any kind, while grave 118 was a simple pit burial with an adult man being laid to rest on his left side with head to the north. One small, and destroyed, travertine vessel was his only grave offering.

It should be reiterated at the close that all the burials can be dated to the turn of the First Dynasty, based on stratigraphic position, characteristic orientation and the categories of grave offerings.

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